

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 310822Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4955

SECDEF WASHDC

S E C R E T TEHRAN 12570

EXDIS

PERSONAL FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER AND SECRETARY RUMSFELD

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO GENERAL SCOWCROFT, WHITE HOUSE

E.O.11652: XGDS 1

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, IR

SUBJ: POSSIBLE CHANGE IN IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY

1. AT AUDIENCE ON AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 30, SHAH INFORMED ME THAT HE WAS GOING TO HAVE TO RE-THINK IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN LIGHT OF SIGNIFICANT REVENUE LOSSES CAUSED BY DROPOFF IN OIL LIFTINGS OF A MILLION BARRELS PER DAY. AFTER POINTING OUT THAT ANY FOREIGN POLICY INVOLVED MILITARY AND ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS AS WELL AS POLITICAL ONES, THE SHAH EXPLAINED THAT HE CANNOT GO ON LENDING MONEY TO COUNTRIES LIKE BRITAIN AND FRANCE NOR CAN HE GO ON BUYING ARMS AND CIVILIAN GOODS FROM THE UNITED STATES UNLESS HE HAS THE REVENUE TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE. HAVING IDENTIFIED THE EXTENT TO WHICH MILITARY POWER PROMOTES POLITICAL LEVERAGE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HE SAID THAT IRAN WOULD BE OBLIGED TO GIVE UP THE IDEA OF EXTENDING ITS INFLUENCE OUTWARD AND WOULD BE OBLIGED TO BE ENTIRELY "INWARD-LOOKING". "YOU AND SAUDI ARABIA CAN HANDLE THE POLICING OF THE INDIAN OCEAN," HE QUIPPED. HE ADDED THAT THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY OF NAVAL PATROLLING AS FAR AS SOUTH AFRICA IF INDEED HE IS OBLIGED TO CANCEL THE SPRUANCE PURCHASE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NAVAL BASE AT CHAH BAHAR, WHICH HE IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING DOING.

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"I WILL BE OBLIGED TO HAVE A PURELY DEFENSIVE NAVY." THE

SHAH RULED OUT MILITARY AID TO OTHER COUNTRIES (CF. LEBANON) BUT SAID HE WOULD NOT PULL OUT OF DHOFAR SINCE HIS COMMITMENT TO SULTAN QABOOS WAS FIRM. THE SHAH WENT OVER IN SOME DETAIL THE OTHER MILITARY PURCHASES HE IS INTENDING TO CANCEL INCLUDING AWACS, AMST, THE F-16, AND REDUCING THE NUMBER OF I-HAWK BATTALIONS NOW ON ORDER. IN SUMMARIZING, THE SHAH EMPHASIZED THAT HE WOULD TAILOR HIS FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES AND HIS MILITARY PURCHASES ENTIRELY TO THE INCOME HIS COUNTRY DERIVES FROM OIL.

2. AT THE CONCLUSION OF HIS COMMENTS INVOLVING THE UNITED STATES, THE SHAH WENT ON TO SAY THAT SINCE BRITAIN AND FRANCE WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR 60 PERCENT OF THE OIL TAKE-OFF FROM IRAN, HE WOULD BE TALKING TO THOSE COUNTRIES ALONG THE SAME LINES THAT HE HAD TALKED TO ME. HE SAID THAT IT MIGHT BE NECESSARY TO CANCEL WEAPONS PURCHASES FROM BRITAIN (CF. RAPIER MISSILE) AND HE MIGHT BE OBLIGED TO CANCEL UNDERSTANDINGS WITH FRANCE FOR BUILDING A SUBWAY SYSTEM IN TEHRAN AND NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS IN OTHER PARTS OF IRAN.

3. DURING COURSE OF DAY DECEMBER 30 THREE APPROACHES WERE MADE TO US OFFICIALS HERE: THE SHAH SPOKE TO ME, AND GENERAL TOUFANIAN, VICE MINISTER OF WAR AND PURCHASER OF ALL IRANIAN WEAPONS SYSTEMS, SPOKE WITH BOTH DEFREP VON MARBOD AND ME SEPARATELY. THE MESSAGE WAS EXACTLY THE SAME. THE APPLICATION OF PRESSURE TO INCREASE OIL LIFTINGS WAS CLEAR. EXACTLY WHAT THE SHAH IN THE END WILL DO IS NOT SO CLEAR. AFTER 33 YEARS IN POWER, HE HAS ENDURED MUCH AND HAS HAD MANY UPS AND DOWNS. HE IS ESSENTIALLY A PRAGMATIST AND IS QUITE CAPABLE OF MAKING UNPLEASANT DECISIONS WHEN HE DECIDES THEY ARE JUSTIFIED. THEREFORE IT WOULD NOT BE ADVISABLE FOR THE USG TO CONCLUDE THAT HE IS BLUFFING. HE IS AMBITIOUS FOR HIS COUNTRY, HE WANTS TO IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF HIS PEOPLE, AND HE DESIRES A LARGER ROLE FOR IRAN ON THE WORLD SCENE. NEVERTHELESS, HE IS NOT CONSUMED BY HIS SHINY GOALS, AND AS HE ONCE SAID TO ME IN ANOTHER CONTEXT, "THE PEOPLE OF MY COUNTRY CAN ALWAYS GO BACK TO SUBSISTING ON GOAT CHEESE AS THEY DID FOR CENTURIES."

4. IN LIGHT OF THE FOREGOING, GENERAL TOUFANIAN'S TRIP TO WASHINGTON IN MID-JANUARY ASSUMES ADDITIONAL IMPORTANCE AND
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SHOULD NOT BE POSTPONED IF IT IS AT ALL POSSIBLE TO ACCOMMODATE HIM. THE VISIT CAN HAVE DISTINCTLY CONSTRUCTIVE ASPECTS IN BRINGING ABOUT REASSURANCE ON DOD PERFORMANCE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PETROLEUM, EXPORTS, EARNINGS, DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 DEC 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TEHRAN12570
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750451-0122
From: TEHRAN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975123/aaaaacdq.tel
Line Count: 111
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 AUG 2003 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <26 NOV 2003 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POSSIBLE CHANGE IN IRANIAN FOREIGN POLICY
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, IR, (PAHLAVI, MOHAMMAD REZA)
To: STATE DOD
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006